

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-6 are presently active, Claim 7 have been previously canceled without prejudice, Claims 8-25 are withdrawn from further consideration as directed to a non-elected invention, and Claim 1 is amended<sup>1</sup>. No new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over the acknowledged prior art in view of Mizuno et al. (US2003/0102904A1).

Applicant initially notes that the Examiner did not acknowledge the references listed on the PTO Form 1449 filed on September 26, 2003 (with the application). Applicant submitted copies of the references and the statement of relevancy in accordance with MPEP. Thus, it is respectfully requested that the references be formally considered and acknowledged, and that a copy of the above-noted PTO Form 1449 properly initialed by the Examiner be provided.

Regarding the rejection of Claims 1-6, Applicant respectfully submits that the rejection is overcome because, in Applicant's view, amended independent Claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the applied references as discussed below.

Claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, "a signal input element connected to the input terminal of the second circuit block to which the signal is input through the propagation circuit has an input withstanding voltage which is higher than that of other elements of the second circuit block" and "when a current due to electrostatic discharge flows between the first power supply terminal and the first ground terminal, the electrostatic discharge protection circuit sets a voltage generated between the first power supply terminal and the first ground terminal

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, specification at page 18, lines 14-20

to be lower than the input withstanding voltage of said plurality of the elements included in the first circuit block.”

The outstanding Office Action admits that the acknowledged prior art fails to teach or suggest “a signal input element connected to the input terminal of the second circuit block to which the signal is input through the propagation circuit has an input withstanding voltage which is higher than that of other elements of the second circuit block” (Office Action at page 3, lines 12-15). The outstanding Office Action cites Mizuno et al. to remedy the deficiency, asserting that Mizuno et al. teaches that the signal input element has an input withstanding voltage, which is higher than that of other elements of the circuit block (Office Action at page 4, lines 3-6).

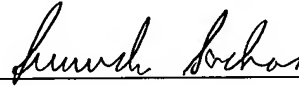
However, in Mizuno et al., the voltage amplitude applied to the gate terminal of power switch (PSW1) is higher than the power supply  $V_{DD}$  (Mizuno et al. at paragraph (0090), lines 17-19), thereby reducing the ON resistance of the circuit. Namely, the power switch controller (PSC) generates a signal with a voltage higher than  $V_{DD}$  to the power switch (PSW1). Therefore, if an electrostatic discharge (hereinafter “ESD”) protection element were connected between power sources of the power switch controller (PSC), the characteristics of the ESD protection element must be adapted for the voltage higher than  $V_{DD}$ . In other words, the ESD protection element for the power switch controller (PSC) must have a holding voltage higher than that is necessary to protect the circuit block (CKT). Thus, the power switch (PSW1) of Mizuno et al. cannot be simply combined with the acknowledged prior art, which adopts an ESD protection circuit common to the first and second circuit blocks. Accordingly, there is no suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine the references teachings. Thus, a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established.

Accordingly, independent Claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the applied references. Therefore, Claim 1 and the pending Claims 2-6 dependent from Claim 1 are believed to be allowable.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussions, it is believed that the outstanding rejection has been overcome, and the application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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